

## WHAT IS CRACK?

Crack is cocaine intensified four to ten times. It resembles slivers of soap in appearance and is often smoked with marijuana or regular tobacco in a pipe. The name “crack” may have evolved because the drug resembles cracked paint chips or because it makes a crackling noise when smoked. It is sold in ready-to-smoke form and can be purchased for as little as \$5.

## CRACK IS ILLEGAL

As a cocaine offense, possession of even one unit of crack can result in up to one year in prison and a \$5,000 fine. Distributing, delivering, or selling crack is a felony and carries a maximum five-year prison penalty and a possible fine of \$15,000. Using crack is a criminal offense that can land one in prison.

## HOW PREVALENT IS CRACK USAGE?

Crack has made a deadly cocaine form widely available and affordable to our youth. The crack epidemic continues to skyrocket because dealers find it so easy to handle and conceal. It is safer to prepare than freebasing, which involves highly flammable solvents, and because intravenous users of drugs may be afraid of contracting AIDS.

Crack's growing availability and convenience of use makes it the most marketable drug sold on the street today.

In 1994, 1,429,000 people in the United States were estimated as having tried crack at

least once in their lives. That is nearly two percent of the United State's population. Included in that number is an estimated 137,000 children between the ages of 12 and 17 - 65,000 boys and 73,000 girls nationwide.

Although the largest percentage of crack users are young, urban males between the ages of 20 and 30, studies indicate crack use cuts across all social, racial and economic boundaries. The 1994 study, provided by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, estimates that 2,817,000 whites, 354,000 hispanics and 782,000 blacks had used crack. Of those users, 102,000 were white children between 12 and 17, 22,000 were hispanic children between 12 and 17 and 13,000 were black children between 12 and 17.

Pennsylvania has already lost too many young lives to this drug.

## PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF CRACK

Because crack is smoked, it enters the body through the lungs and then goes directly through the heart to the brain in as little as 6 to 10 seconds. Crack greatly exaggerates all of cocaine's side effects - including those that can instantly kill. By disturbing the brain's electrical messages and the heart's rhythms, users can die of respiratory failure, cardiac arrest, or strokes. Possible overdoses, fatal reactions to impurities, or accidents that occur while under the influence of crack increase inherent risks of death.

In other words, users risk death each time they try crack. It can kill the very first time it is used, or the 100<sup>th</sup> time. The amount that

was used yesterday can kill tomorrow.

The problems associated with crack use extend to the psychological as well as the physical. The euphoric high which results from smoking crack lasts about 15 to 20 minutes and is followed by a crushing depression. This depression causes the crack user to crave another hit of the drug. As a result, crack is almost instantly addicting. The National Institute on Drug Abuse estimates that an addiction to regular cocaine develops after several years while crack users are usually hooked after only 6 - 10 weeks. Crack users themselves indicate that addiction may actually be even quicker and more powerful. More than 54% of those surveyed by the National Cocaine Hotline reported they began to get addicted the very first time they used it.

## SOCIETAL EFFECTS OF CRACK USE

The social consequences of crack use are significant since it quickly becomes the most important thing in the user's life, overpowering such needs as eating, family life, sex, personal health, and career. Furthermore, many crack users are also addicted to alcohol and other drugs to relieve crack's unpleasant side effects.

Because of the highly addictive nature of the drug, crack often requires its users to spend enormous amounts of money on the drug, and the consequence is very often a major contributor to drug-related crimes, including dealing in the drug trade, theft, robbery, burglary, and violence. Law

enforcement agencies around the country have noticed significant increases in burglaries and armed robberies where crack is sold. Police and drug experts have noted crimes are committed by addicts, many of whom have no previous police records.

Another issue, use of cocaine during pregnancy, has created crack babies resulting in excess hospital costs of more than \$500 million a year.

### THE BOTTOM LINE

Crack leads to serious legal, physical, social, and mental problems. Crack can kill instantly, or destroy one's life over a short period of time.

*Users  
risk  
death  
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*Provided by the Office of  
Attorney General Mike Fisher*

For more information please contact:

### National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information

P.O. Box 2345  
Rockville, MD  
1-800-729-6686  
[www.health.org](http://www.health.org)

### Drug Abuse Information and Treatment Referral Hotline

**1-800-662-HELP**



Check out our website:  
[www.attorneygeneral.gov](http://www.attorneygeneral.gov)

# CRACK COCAINE

## Facts Everyone Should Know

*Crack cocaine is one of the most addictive - and deadliest - of drugs. It is relatively easy to get and inexpensive compared to other stimulants. The epidemic we now see is the result of the convenience of the drug. Crack is small, cheap and easy to hide.*

*The consequences of Crack go beyond the physical deterioration of the user. Families, communities and society are all affected. The criminal manifestations of the users who need to "score" a hit affect us all. The only way to prevent abuse and preserve our communities is through education.*

*I hope this information helps you understand the dangers of crack and you use your knowledge to join us in demolishing this killer.*



*Mike Fisher*  
Mike Fisher  
Attorney General